

Battersea
Petersburg
Dinwiddie County
Virginia

HABS No. VA 136

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Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORIC AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Virginia

Historic American Buildings Survey

Prepared at Washington Office

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27. PETBATTERSEA (RESIDENCE)
Petersburg, Virginia

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Owner: Ferkinson, Russel

Date of Erection: C.1765

Architect:

Builder:

Present Condition: Fair. Some changes from original (see below)

Number of Stories: Central Block two stories, wings and connections one.

Materials of Construction: Brick, laid in Flemish bond, plastered over.

Other Existing Records:

Additional Data: Both the basement and superstructure have beveled water table, as can be seen where the plaster has broken away. The joints are tooled. The central block has a porch with four fluted Doric columns, one of which is modern as is the entablature. There are small porticos of two columns at the end of either wing. The porticos were described in 1781. These wings have pediments toward the forecourt. All sash except one on east elevation seems to be replaced (c.1800); the interior transom in salon (Room 2) shows original muntins.

Room A: (See key plan, next page). Original 8 panel exterior door, very large in scale with this panelmould. Paneled dado (c.1765), paneled jambs, etc. Long horizontal panel over fireplace indicates paneled overmantel at one time. Door to left, stair to right c.1800. No cornice.

Room B: Paneled dado c.1765, mantel wood c.1800. Two windows in rear, one triple in front, once probably two in front also, dado shows mutilation under long window.

Room C: Paneled dado c.1765, mantel marble c.1800. Double doors c.1800, arched transomed south doorway original with trim.

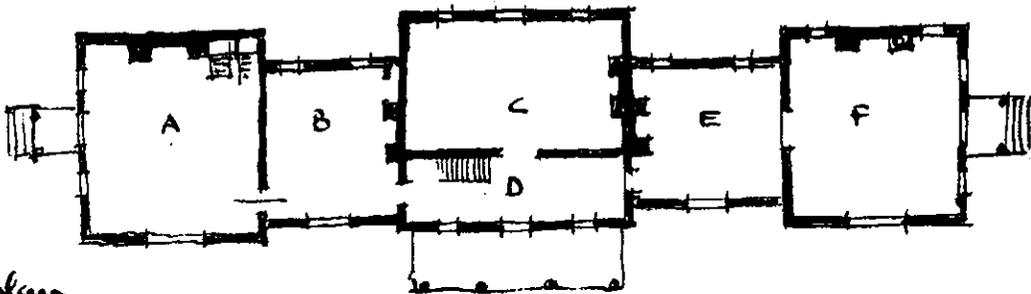
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Additional Data: (Continued)

Hall D: Trim orig. except for entrance doorway. Chinese Chippendale stair, trellis balustrades carved strapwork newel post. Paneled dado. Carved fret at floor line.

Room E: All trim c.1800. Marble mantel grey and white.

Room F: All trim c.1800. White marble mantel, wide pilasters, frieze carved with wreaths and stars.



Sketch plan
per memory.

Thomas T. Waterman
Thomas T. Waterman, Assoc. Arch.

Approved: *J.P.D.* Mar. 1939.

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3'

BATTERSEA (Residence)
Petersburg, Virginia

Owner: Dennie Perkinson

Date of Erection: c.1760

Architect: Unknown

Builder: John Banister (owner)

Present Condition: Good

Number of Stories: Basement with a central portion above two stories high and lower two story detached wings with one story connections to central portion.

Materials of Construction: Brick, exterior stuccoed. Present roof tin.

Other Existing Records: None known

Additional Data: The building was appreciably altered about 1815, and the exterior, which was originally brick has been plastered.

On the wall of Battersea, just east of the south portico, is a stone tablet bearing the following inscription:

BATTERSEA - 1760
HOME OF COL. JOHN BANISTER
OF THE REVOLUTION
OCCUPIED BY THE BRITISH
UNDER SIMCOE.
ERECTED BY
FRANCIS BLAND RANDOLPH
CHAPTER D. A. R., 1911.

The present owner and occupant of Battersea is Mr. Dennie Perkinson, who has owned the place since about 1910. His son, Mr. R. S. Perkinson also lives there with his family. Mr. R. S. Perkinson states that a few years after Battersea was built (1760) it was included within enlarged limits of the town in order that John Banister, builder and owner of Battersea, might be made mayor of Petersburg. This may have been in 1762, when an act was passed enlarging the town. "Ye Olden Tymes", History of Petersburg, Va. (By J. Pinckney Williamson, Petersburg, Va.,

1906.), p. 11.

The inscription on the D. A. R. tablet quoted above states that Battersea was "occupied by the British under Simcoe." Dr. W. B. Banister, in his manuscript quoted below, states that "Battersea was used as barracks by the soldiers of Lt. Col. Simcoe". It is altogether probable that the house was also occupied at that time, April-May, 1781, by Col. Simcoe as his headquarters. That is the belief of Mr. R. S. Perkinson, which is shared by Mrs. W. B. Banister. The latter is somewhat familiar with the history and traditions of Battersea, and her deceased husband, Dr. W. B. Banister, made historical investigations and wrote some papers concerning Col. John Banister and the Battersea estate.

In a pen-written manuscript of twenty pages, entitled, "A Patriot of the American Revolution," Dr. W. B. Banister sketched the life of Col. John Banister and gave some facts concerning his father, Capt. John Banister, and his grandfather, the Rev. John Banister, a priest of the Church of England, who was the original emigrant from England to Virginia. The following passages are quoted from Dr. Banister's manuscript.

P. 2. -... "In 1660 he (the Rev. John Banister) patented 1730 acres of land on Hatcher's Run on the South side of the Appomattox River, Va., a few miles southwest of Petersburg.... His only child was Capt. John Banister of Hatcher's Run, whose wife's name was Wilmette (surname unknown).

"Capt. John Banister had two children, Martha, who married Robert Bolling 1/IV of "Bollingbrook," Petersburg, Va., and Colonel John Banister of Battersea, Petersburg"...Page 3.

"Colonel John Banister was born at Hatcher's Run December 26th, 1734. His parents were Wilmette and Capt. John Banister, vestryman of the Old Brick Church, Blandford. He was educated in England and bred to the law at the Temple, London. The Hatcher's Run home burned down while the family was absent, with the loss of the family silver, portraits, etc. Colonel Banister returned from England about 1760. He built Battersea the same year and married Elizabeth Bland, daughter of Theodorick Bland and Frances Bolling of Cawson's....Pp. 4-5.

..."Being the proprietor of a large estate he (Col. John Banister) repeatedly suffered heavy losses from the depredations of the enemy." (Quoted from Bland Papers, P. XXVII.) Page 11.

"Col. John Banister was one of five officers who sacrificed most of their fortunes for America's cause." (Quoted from letter of 18th November, 1933, of Dandridge Spotswood, genealogist, Petersburg, Virginia). Page 11.

"Battersea was used as barracks by the soldiers of Lt. Col. Simcoe. At one time Col. Banister provided a body of troops then on their way southward (to join Gen. Greene), and suffering from want of clothing, with blankets at his own expense, and he converted his mills at Battersea into factories for making gunpowder and at times used for hospital purposes. Col. Banister furnished 900 wagon loads of wood cut off his land for the use of Continental troops stationed at Petersburg in the winter of 1780 and 1781. - 1 hhd. of rum, 110 gallons, for the

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use of militia as per certf., and lumber on 50 acres of land that was cut down for Continental stables and pasture as per certf. (Court of Claims at the Court House at Dinwiddie on Saturday, 23 July, 1785)."...Pages 11-12.

Edward Wyatt, Historical Assistant, Petersburg National Military Park, wrote "A Note on the Landmarks of Dinwiddie County, near Petersburg, Va.," dated June 21, 1934. In it he remarked concerning Battersea:

"Going west from Petersburg into Dinwiddie County, one encounters first the fine old brick and stucco mansion, 'Battersea', formerly in the county, but now in the city of Petersburg, which was erected several years prior to the Revolution and which was the home of Colonel John Banister, Revolutionary patriot, soldier, and legislator, and grandson of the eminent Colonial botanist of the name. 'Battersea' aroused the interest of such discriminating early American travellers as the Marquis de Chastellux and Count Castiglioni, and well it might, for in addition to a distinguished external appearance it has fine interior work, including a Chinese Chippendale stairway,"...

Under date of May 3, 1934, a typewritten manuscript entitled, "Sketches of Historic Sites in Petersburg prepared by the C. W. A. and E. C. W. Historical Staff, April, 1934," was submitted by Branch Spalding, Historical Technician, to the Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations, Department of the Interior. The following extracts are taken from the section of this manuscript headed, "Colonel John Banister of 'Battersea'".

Page 30. - "We are indebted to that observant and delightful traveller, the Marquis de Chastelleux, 'one of the forty members of the French Academy and Major-General in the French Army, serving under the Count de Rochambeau,' for the most extensive literary description of 'Battersea' which we have. After visiting Mrs. Bolling of 'East Hill', the marquis was conducted by a Mr. Victor to 'the camp formerly occupied by the British enemy', at which Mr. Victor 'testified his regret that I could not take a nearer view of Mr. Banister's handsome country house, which was in sight, there being no obstacle other than the distance, about a mile and a half, and the noonday heat', which they determined should not stop them. The fact that the two while at the British camp were about a mile and a half from 'Battersea', is significant in the light of the statement that the mansion suffered from British depredation. The house, stated Chastelleux, 'is decorated rather in the Italian than the English or American style, having three porticoes at the three principal entries, each of them supported by four columns.' [NOTE. There are four porticoes now, 1940, apparently all of the same age.] The editor of the American edition of 1828 of Chastelleux's 'Travels in North America' remarks that the Italian architecture, 'that of the porticoes in particular, is admirably adapted to all hot climates, and of course to the southern States of America.' At 'Battersea' the marquis found a Mr. Nelson, of Carolina, 'who had been driven from his country by the war, which followed him to Petersburg', and whose story so interested the visitor that he gives an account of it in his book. (37)

"Another eminent traveller who mentions Colonel Banister and his home was the Count Castiglioni, who visited Petersburg during his American tour of 1785-1787,...(38)

"'Battersea' in addition to being a show place which eminent visitors viewed, was a social center for the gentle people of the section, where the Blands, Randolphins, and Tuckers visited. Among the young men who visited 'Battersea' were John Randolph _____ later to be known as John Randolph of Roanoke _____ and his brother, who lived across the Appomattox at 'Matoax', the home of their mother, who was born Frances Bland, and their stepfather, St. George Tucker."

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- (37). Travels in North America in the year 1780-81-82 by the "Marquis de Chastelleux". Pp. 272-3.
(38). A. J. Morrison - Travels in Virginia in Revolutionary Times. P. 65.

In 1903, at the time of the merger and consolidation of several milling companies near Petersburg into the Virginia Consolidated Milling Company, a volume of 527 pages containing papers and records concerning the merger and consolidation was published by Charles Hall Davis, Secretary, Virginia Consolidated Milling Company. It is entitled, Handbook of Information in Reference to the Virginia Consolidated Milling Company. By its Secretary and with the advice of its Counsel. (Petersburg, Virginia, Buchanan Mfg. Co., September 1, 1903.)

Among the abstracts of title to properties and other legal documents affecting the merger and consolidation which are reproduced in the above volume are several which contain references to Battersea and have historical value as establishing the ownership of the Battersea house and certain parts of the Battersea property at different periods. Several such documents appear on pages 413-15 under the general title, "Abstract of Title to Property formerly owned by the Upper Appomattox Company, situated in the County of Dinwiddie between the Corporate line of Petersburg and Indian Town Run." The earliest of these in date is an agreement, not recorded, running, in part, as follows:

"The agreement between John M. Banister in his own behalf and as attorney in fact for his Brother Theodoric B. Banister on the one part, and Richard N. Venable on behalf of the Upper Appomattox Company, of the other part, is as follows:

"The said John for himself and brother sells the Upper Appomattox Company a trace for a canal through the tract of land on which Battersea house now stands the tract sold is one hundred and forty feet in width it is supposed at this time that the said trace will take thirteen acres...Witness our hands this 18th day of April, 1805."

The above agreement is signed by John M. Banister on his own behalf and as attorney in fact for his brother, Theodoric B. Banister, as owners at that time of the Battersea property.

Another document, occurring on pages 114-15, is an indenture made, like the above agreement, on the 18th of April, 1805, and

signed by "John M. Banister and the said John as attorney in fact for his brother Theodorick B. Banister." By it they agreed to "give grant bargain and sell unto the said Appox. Co. and to there forever for the consideration of one hundred and fifty six pounds Virginia Currency to the said John M. Banister in hand paid by the trustees of the said Upper Appomattox Co., a narrow slip or tract of land one hundred and forty feet in width running from Indian Town Creek to Prides old field near the Town of Petersburg, passing entirely through the tract of land on which Battersea house stands and in such part of the said tract as may be found by the Company most convenient to conduct their canal through, the narrow slip or tract of land supposed to contain thirteen acres be the same more or less."...

The above John Monroe Banister and Theodorick Blair Banister were the sons of Colonel John Banister and his second wife, Anna (Blair) Banister. (Dr. W. B. Banister manuscript, p. 6.)

On page 72 of the Handbook of Information, etc. is reproduced a deed dated 24th March 1823, and recorded in Deed Book 7, page 163, in which Theodorick Blair Banister, of Amelia County, John Monroe Banister, of Sussex County, of the first part, William Haxall, of Petersburg, of the second part, and John Fitzhugh May, also of Petersburg, of the third part, conveyed a certain tract of land to Haxall, who in turn conveyed it to May. The property is described in the deed as follows:

..."a certain tract or parcel of land called Battersea, lying in the town of Petersburg, in the County of Dinwiddie, containing by estimate about 238 acres and 5/6 of an acre, be the same more or less however much; bounded as follows, - one portion thereof by Appomattox (River) on the north, by the Indian Town Creek on the west, by Cox's road on the south and partly on the east, by Prides-Field on the east, thro' a portion of which the canal extends;"...

An additional tract which was also conveyed is then described. But the above indicates the transfer of Battersea in 1823 from at least the partial ownership of the Banisters to that of John Fitzhugh May.

On page 74 is reproduced a deed dated 10th June, 1828, admitted to record on 23rd December, 1828, and recorded in Deed Book 8, page 341, it is recited that

"Whereas Theodorick B. Banister and John Monroe Banister have conveyed to John F. May certain lands, being a part of the Battersea estate and including the dwelling house, as will appear by their deed of record in Dinwiddie and Petersburg," therefore the said T. B. and J. M. Banister renounced all claim to, and confirmed John F. May's title in, a certain slip of land on which a highway might be built, title to which land has previously been in doubt.

According to Mrs. W. B. Banister, the father of her deceased husband, Dr. W. B. Banister, was John Monroe Banister II, son of the John Monroe Banister mentioned in the above documents. She says that John Monroe Banister II was born at Battersea and died in 1907 aged 89 years. He must therefore have been born about 1818, which would have been five years before Battersea was con-

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veyed to John F. May according to the records cited above.

At some later time, as yet undetermined, the Battersea house appears to have passed into the possession of a family named Wright. This family is presumed to have owned it during the war period, 1861-1865, and to have sold it to Mr. Dennie Perkinson about 1910. (Source: Joseph Mills Hanson, Assistant Research Technician, Petersburg National Military Park)

Just above Petersburg, on the banks of the Appomattox, is Battersea. Of this imposing villa--the home of the Banister family--the Marquis de Chastellux, who visited it during the Revolution, writes: "It is decorated in the Italian rather than in the English or American style, having three porticoes at the three principal entrances, each of them supported by four columns." He says the house was occupied by "an inhabitant of Carolina, called Nelson, who had been driven from his country by the war, which followed him to Petersburg."

The first of the Banisters in this country was the Reverend John Banister, a distinguished naturalist, who was living in Charles City County in 1689, and in the next year received a grant of land in Bristol Parish. While on a botanical excursion, in 1692, he slipped and fell from rocks on the Roanoke River and was killed. His son, John, who was collector for the Upper James, vestryman of Bristol Parish and Justice of Prince George County, owned land near the present site of Petersburg, which was doubtless identical with the Battersea estate. He was the father of Colonel John Banister, of Battersea, who was a burgess from Dinwiddie County, member of the Revolutionary conventions and lieutenant colonel of cavalry in the Revolutionary conventions, and in 1778-1779 a member of Congress. Colonel Banister was twice married, first to Martha, daughter of Colonel Theodorick Bland, of "Cawsons", and afterwards to Anne, daughter of President John Blair of the Colonial Council. By his first marriage he had three children, but this branch of the family is now extinct. By his marriage with Anne Blair he left two sons, Theodorick Blair and John Monro Banister. (Historic Virginia Homes and Churches - Lancaster)

Author: Eugene Bradley

Approved: W. Waterman 5/2/41